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Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to Guyana

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit to the Human Rights Council the report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to Guyana from 2 to 6 October 2017. In the report, the Working Group presents the current legal, institutional and policy framework and measures taken to prevent racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent in Guyana, underscoring positive developments as well as gaps in implementation. The Working Group describes the situation, highlights good practices and the main challenges identified, and makes concrete recommendations.

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Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to Guyana*

I. Introduction

1. The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent undertook a visit to Guyana, at the invitation of the Government, from 2 to 6 October 2017. The members of the delegation were Sabelo Gumedze (Chair), Michal Balcerzak and Ahmed Reid.

2. During the visit, the Working Group assessed the situation of human rights of people of African descent living in Guyana, and gathered information on any forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance that they face. The Working Group studied the official measures taken and the mechanisms intended to prevent structural discrimination and to protect victims of racism, as well as responses to multiple forms of discrimination in accordance with the concept of intersectionality.

3. As part of its fact-finding mission, the Working Group visited Georgetown, Linden and Buxton. It met with the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Attorney General and Minister for Legal Affairs, and Members of Parliament, including representatives of the opposition. The Working Group also met with senior officials from the ministries of the Presidency, Education, Communities, Public Infrastructure, Public Security, Public Health, Social Protection, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, and also from the Department of Social Cohesion and the Guyana Bureau of Statistics. Similarly, the Working Group met with the Ombudsman and members of his staff, representatives of national human rights institutions, including the Indigenous Peoples' Commission and the Women and Gender Equality Commission, and civil society. In Linden, the Working Group met with the Mayor and city councillors, and also with the Chairperson of the Regional Democratic Council. It also met with the Director of Prisons and visited the Lusignan Prison. The Working Group also met with representatives of civil society and the community of persons of African descent in Buxton.

4. The Working Group thanks the Government of Guyana and in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for organizing the visit. It also thanks the United Nations country team in Guyana and the Resident Coordinator, civil society organizations, human rights defenders, lawyers, academics and individuals that it met during the visit, who are working to promote and protect the rights of Afro-Guyanese, creating initiatives and proposing strategies to address structural racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance.

II. Background: historical overview

5. Guyana is located on the north-eastern coast of South America. It is bound on the north by the Atlantic Ocean, to the south by Brazil, to the east by Suriname and to the west by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Guyana covers a territory of approximately 215,000 km^2, the majority of which is dense tropical forest. Knowledge of the history of colonization and enslavement in Guyana is essential to understand the contemporary situation of human rights of people of African descent in the country. Guyana was first colonized by the Dutch who, through the establishment of the Dutch West India Company in 1621, turned to the importation of enslaved Africans to sustain the burgeoning sugar, cotton, coffee and tobacco industries. From 1815 until its independence in 1966, the territories of present-day Guyana were under British colonial rule.

6. Although the abolition of the trade in enslaved Africans was proclaimed by the Government of Great Britain in 1807, enslavement continued. Sugar planters in Guyana and the Caribbean and their political and financial backers in Great Britain were not yet

* Circulated in the language of submission only.

ready for the final abolition of enslavement. The Emancipation Act of 1833 abolished enslavement only after British planters argued that the freeing of enslaved people by British legislation was a violation of their property rights, and that they therefore demanded compensation. They subsequently received £20 million sterling (approx. £17 billion in modern currency) from the Government as compensation for the loss of their "property". The act also stipulated that enslaved persons would continue to work on the plantations as "apprentices" for a further period of six years, a deliberate way to ensure that plantation owners were provided with free labour (at an estimated cost of £27 million). The trade in enslaved Africans, which began in 1640, had introduced a sizeable African population in excess of 80,000 by the time enslavement was finally abolished in 1838 (A/HRC/10/11/Add.2, para. 10). Owing to a perceived shortage of labour, an estimated 239,000 Indian indentured labourers were brought to Guyana between 1838 and 1917.

7. The legacy of colonialism and the trade in enslaved Africans has determined the demographic constitution of the country's population, and its overall social, economic, political structures as well. Six ethnic groups make up the population. Five of these distinct groups are a direct result of immigration policies based on the country's colonial past. The population, therefore, comprises groups of persons with nationality backgrounds from Europe (whites and Portuguese), Africa, China and India, with the Amerindians as the indigenous population. Guyana is the only English-speaking country on the mainland of South America. These groups of diverse nationality backgrounds have been fused together by English, the common language.[1]

8. According to the national census conducted in 2012, the total population was 746,955, which was marginally down by 4,268 when compared to the number found during the 2002 census. The primary cause of this decrease was a net outflow of residents. East Indians are the largest ethnic group, and currently account for 39.8 per cent (297,493), down from 43.4 per cent in 2002. They are followed by persons of African origin (29.2 per cent), down from 30.2 per cent. The third in rank are those of mixed heritage (19.9 per cent), up from 16.7 per cent in 2002. This group has grown significantly over the past three decades. A similar trend is noticeable for the Amerindian group, which currently accounts for 10.5 per cent of the population. The smallest groups are the whites (0.06 per cent), Chinese (0.18 per cent) and Portuguese (0.26 per cent). Approximately 90 per cent of the population lives in the coastal parts of the country, while the remaining 10 per cent lives in the hinterlands.[2]

III. Legal framework and steps taken for the protection of the human rights of people of African descent

A. Legal framework

9. Guyana has ratified all the major international human rights treaties, with the exception of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

10. Guyana has not developed a specific national action plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or other forms of intolerance. The protection of human rights and the prohibition of racial discrimination is enshrined in the Constitution. Article 149, paragraph 1 of the Constitution of Guyana states that "no law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect", and that "no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority." Article 149, paragraph 2 defines "discriminatory" as "affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their or their parents' or guardians' respective descriptions

[1] See Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2012 population and housing census, available at www.statistics guyana.gov.gy/census.html.

[2] Ibid.

by race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, age, disability, marital status, sex, gender, language, birth, social class, pregnancy, religion, conscience, belief or culture".

11. Article 154 (A) (1) of the Constitution also provides that "every person [...] is entitled to the human rights enshrined in [the] international treaties [to which Guyana has acceded], and such rights shall be respected and upheld by the executive, legislature, judiciary and all organs and agencies of the Government and where applicable to them, by all natural and legal persons".

12. The Racial Hostility (Amendment) Act of 2002 made it a criminal offence to excite hostility or ill will against persons because of their race, and prohibits incitement to racial hatred, including by spoken, written or published word. Persons convicted of the offence forfeit their eligibility to stand for public office for five years, commencing from the date of conviction. The act provides for greater penalties for offences and evidential issues.

13. The Prevention of Discrimination Act of 1997 aims to eliminate discrimination in employment, training, recruitment and membership or professional bodies, and promotes equal remuneration for men and women performing work of equal value. It prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, religion, colour, ethnic origin, indigenous population, national extraction, social origin, economic status, political opinion, disability, family responsibilities, pregnancy, marital status or age, and places restrictions on the employment of minors. The law allows for the introduction of affirmative action or temporary special measures to promote equality of opportunity in employment.

14. Under the Constitution and the Ombudsman Act, the Ombudsman is empowered to investigate any action taken by any department of Government, by the President, ministers, officers or members of such a department or authority, taken in exercise of the administrative functions of that department or authority.

B. Institutional and policy measures

15. The revised Constitution of 2003 provides for the appointment of the national institutions governing ethnic relations, women and gender equality, the rights of the child, indigenous peoples, and human rights. The Working Group welcomes the appointment of members to the Ethnic Relations Commission in January 2018. It notes with regret, however, that none has been appointed to the Human Rights Commission. The Working Group was informed that the delay was due primarily to the lack of political consensus on the appointments.

16. The Working Group welcomes the efforts made by the Government for its "Five Bs" initiative aimed at providing boats, buses, bicycles, breakfast and books to school children for easier access to school, and other basic school needs for students across the country. It also notes the Green State Development Strategy, which takes into account, among other issues, human rights, multi-ethnicity, gender equality, non-discrimination and the protection of vulnerable and marginalized population groups as principles for social cohesion and inclusion. It is also aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

17. The Working Group noted the significant lack of disaggregated data required to inform policies. The national population and housing census conducted in 2012 resulted in a considerable amount of data that, regrettably, have been neither disaggregated nor analysed. Although data on ethnicity are available, they should be used to monitor the situation of people of African descent, to assess the progress made, to increase their visibility and to identify social gaps in social and economic conditions. The data should also be used to assess and guide the formulation of policies and action to prevent, combat and eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance. The Working Group recalls that, in paragraph 92 of the Durban Declaration, States are encouraged to collect, compile, analyse, disseminate and publish reliable statistical data at the national and local levels, and to undertake all other related measures necessary to assess regularly the situation of individuals and groups of individuals who are victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

18. The Police Complaints Authority, established by the Police Complaints Authority Act of 1989, became operational in January 1990. It allows members of the general public to report alleged disciplinary and criminal offences by members of the Guyana police force. It oversees the investigations into allegations and decides on whether reports should be recorded and investigated further (also in cases where a police officer who had received a report of a crime has failed or refused to record and investigate an offence).

19. The Working Group was informed that, even though the month of August is set aside for Emancipation Month, only few villages were able to celebrate the month owing to a lack of resources. It therefore welcomes the formation of the Guyana Reparations Committee and the Government's commitment to fund it, and the civil society led-initiative to coordinate the programmes, plans and events for the International Decade for People of African Descent in Guyana. The Working Group also welcomes the call made by the Government for the submission of funding proposals for activities relating to the International Decade. From 8 to 11 March 2018, Guyana hosted an international meeting on the International Decade, to which a member of the Working Group was invited to give a presentation. The meeting, which was organized by civil society entities with the support of the Government, witnessed the attendance of more than 100 scholars, human rights activists and individuals from the private sector in the fields of business, information and communications technology, health and education, among others. Discussions held at the meeting, which had the theme "Where we are, where we ought to be, and how we get there", focused on encouraging participants to cooperate across disciplines to share working models that have been effective in the development of people of African descent and their communities, within the framework of the International Decade. The Working Group welcomes the laudable effort made by the Government and civil society in Guyana, and urges other Member States to work closely with civil society to achieve the goals and objectives set out in the Programme of Action for the International Decade.

IV. Racial discrimination

A. Criminal justice system, representation, negative stereotypes and the media

20. The Working Group found that, even though the majority of the members of the Guyana police force is Afro-Guyanese, civil society entities continue to report a high incidence of racial profiling by the police force, which had a significant impact on persons of African descent. The Working Group was also informed about cases of alleged extrajudicial killing by the police over the past decades, and the failure to effectively investigate the cases and to secure justice. The Working Group calls for a thorough investigation of such abuses. It regrets that it was unable to meet with the Commissioner of Police, as had been planned. The Working Group met with the Police Complaints Authority, according to which between January and September 2016, complaints had increased by 33 per cent over those lodged during the same period in 2015. Most of the complaints lodged fell under the category of neglect of duty. Lack of resources and capacity were also cited as concerns.

21. The Working Group was informed that the majority of inmates and detainees were of Afro-Guyanese origin. It is seriously concerned at the overcrowding and substandard conditions witnessed in prison facilities. The Working Group also learned that the overcrowding could, to some extent, be attributed to the prevalence of lengthy pretrial detention. The situation was further exacerbated when inmates at Camp Street Prison, the largest prison in Guyana, allegedly set fire to the prison on 9 July 2017 in protest against the overcrowding of the facility, which was reportedly designed to accommodate no more than 600 inmates. At the time of the incident, the prison housed approximately 984 inmates, the majority of whom were of African descent. It was reported that the inmates were at the time being accommodated in an open field stadium.

22. The Working Group visited Lusignan Prison, where the majority of inmates are Afro-Guyanese. Inmates were kept in appalling conditions not fit for human habitation.

Overcrowding was a major concern. Members of the delegation visited one cellblock built to accommodate 30 inmates that held more than 80, all of whom had to share one shower and one toilet. The stench emanating from the landfill next to the cellblock combined with that from the stagnant water below and beside the cellblocks was unbearable. The unhygienic conditions of the prison and associated health risks are of serious concern. Although inmates with tuberculosis were held in a separate room within the prison facility, such a measure is insufficient to prevent the spread of the disease to other inmates. The wooden structure of the facility also poses a significant fire hazard. The Working Group found that the prison clearly fell short of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). No human being should be subjected to such dehumanizing conditions.

23. Following the conclusion of its visit, the Working Group was informed that a detainee at Lusignan Prison, who had been interviewed by members of the delegation, had suffered reprisals, in the form of verbal threats, following contact with the Working Group (see A/HRC/37/80 and Corr.1).

24. Civil society entities reported to the Working Group that the conditions in juvenile detention centres were similar to those in prisons and were not adequate to ensure the rehabilitation of juveniles. They also reported that there were no specific diversionary options for juveniles to ensure that detention was the last resort. Persons of African descent also reported that they were frequently stereotyped as being more likely to commit crimes.

B. Disparities in access to education, health, housing and employment

25. The Working Group noted serious deficiencies in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by people of African descent. It was informed about the considerable challenges that people faced, such as lack of job opportunities, inadequate access to quality health care and social security, environmental risks and issues affecting access to secondary and tertiary education. Rural areas are characterized to a considerable degree by underinvestment, while access to most resources and opportunities is significantly confined to Georgetown. Civil society entities reported that Afro-Guyanese villages were distinctly recognizable by their poor infrastructure and substandard housing and roads. The Working Group was also informed about the lack of a university in Linden, which meant that students wishing to obtain a higher education were forced to commute every day to Georgetown.

26. The Working Group noted that more needed to be done with regard to data collection, which should take into account economic and social indicators, including, where appropriate, health and health status, infant and maternal mortality, life expectancy, literacy, education, employment, housing, land ownership, mental and physical health care, water, sanitation, energy and communications services, poverty and average disposable income. The mass emigration of Guyanese is also a matter of concern.

27. The State is the largest landowner, while the second largest landowners are the Amerindian (indigenous) villages, which own communal land titles accounting for 14 per cent of national land mass (A/HRC/WG.6/21/GUY/1, para. 38). In March 2017, a commission of inquiry was set up by the President to examine and address uncertainties surrounding individual, joint and communal ownership of land across the country, and to make recommendations thereon. The Working Group notes the effort made by the said commission to resolve the issue of land ownership by Afro-Guyanese, among others. The commission is expected to examine in particular the tracts of land previously bought and owned by people of African descent after their emancipation. The Working Group is aware of the importance of land as historically the first basis for economic production. It noted that civil society organizations promoting the rights of people of African descent in the country have demanded compensation for the descendants of enslaved freed Africans for lands purchased by their ancestors.

28. The Working Group is especially concerned that school curricula do not accurately or adequately reflect the history of people of African descent in Guyana — including the

history of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, enslavement and colonialism — and their achievements and contribution to its development.

29. The Working Group was informed that the once thriving bauxite mining industry in Linden, which had provided employment opportunities to many, had been affected by the fluctuating prices of and decrease in demand for bauxite on the world market, resulting in the downscaling of the workforce within that industry. Many miners who had been laid off after working for decades had received low severance pay and had no access to their pension. The Working Group was also informed about the lack of attention paid to issues arising from the poor health and safety concerns of mineworkers, who are predominantly of African descent.

C. Multiple forms of discrimination

30. Afro-Guyanese women often face inequalities and multiple forms of discrimination on the grounds of their race, colour, gender and religious belief.

31. The Working Group was informed that many women of African descent, who were often the sole breadwinners for their families, were afraid or reluctant to report certain crimes, such as domestic violence or sexual abuse, for fear of stigmatization within their communities, resulting in general underreporting of them. Although the participation of women in the labour force was rising, women were also increasingly doing low-paying jobs. The Working Group was also concerned at the high dropout rates of girls. Civil society entities also informed the Working Group that institutions such as the Women and Gender Equality Commission were less accessible to women in rural parts of the country.

32. Civil society entities also reported that, despite greater awareness about sexual and gender-based violence and improved counselling services and vigilance, and despite the review of the Sexual Offences Act, legal protection was still inadequate, as reflected in the very low conviction rates for sexual offences.

33. Civil society entities reported that discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and sex workers was widely prevalent. Transgender Guyanese persons in particular were criminalized and stigmatized, and subjected to discrimination because they were more visible than other members of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community. One transgender person shared a personal story with the Working Group on how she had been subjected to discrimination when she tried to petition a court of law in Guyana. The magistrate refused to hear her matter and even asked that she leave the courtroom because she was "cross-dressed"; in fact, according to section 153 (1) (xlvii) of the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act, cross-gender dressing is an offence. Sexual minorities are not protected under the clause in the Constitution on protection from discrimination. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons often choose not to express their sexual orientation or identity out of fear of being threatened, subjected to discrimination or victimized.

34. Members of the Rastafari community reported to the Working Group that they had been increasingly marginalized in the exercise of their cultural and religious rights, leading to a life of poverty, disease and illiteracy; they were therefore more vulnerable to many of the social ills that affect the general population.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

35. **Guyana is a multi-ethnic, multiracial, multilingual and multi-religious country. The people of Guyana share a common history of enslavement, indentureship and colonialism, and have endeavoured to build social cohesion out of a fragmented past. The Working Group found nevertheless that ethnic divisions were generally reflected in political parties, as well as in the public and private sectors, and that ethnic polarization became more conspicuous in the run-up to elections.**

36. The Working Group notes with concern the delays in the appointment of members to the Human Rights Commission, leading to a protection gap, given that human rights obligations are not monitored and racism and racial discrimination are not prohibited.

37. The Working Group learned that the judicial system was undermined by the excessive length of proceedings, especially at the pretrial stage. Pretrial detention is also a matter of serious concern. In addition, the enjoyment of the right to legal representation is often limited to those who can afford to pay, giving rise to a serious concern about the right to a fair trial in the criminal justice system.

38. The overcrowding of prisons is also a serious concern. Overcrowding is caused by the limited capacity of prison facilities, lengthy pretrial detention and a general lack of resources.

39. The Working Group is also concerned at reports of cases of extrajudicial killing by the police over the past decades, and at the failure to effectively investigate and provide justice, including when persons of African descent were targeted.

40. The Working Group welcomes the positive outcome declaration made at the meeting on the International Decade for People of African Descent held in March 2018, which, inter alia, envisaged the establishment of an international network for the implementation of creative solutions to the issues that people of African descent faced, within the framework of the International Decade.

41. Racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance are manifested in a differentiated manner for women and girls, and can be among the factors leading to a deterioration in their living conditions, poverty, violence, multiple forms of discrimination, and the limitation or denial of their human rights. The Working Group recognizes the need to integrate a gender perspective into relevant policies, strategies and programmes of action to address multiple forms of discrimination.

B. Recommendations

42. The Working Group recommends that Guyana undertake impact-oriented activities in the framework of the International Decade for People of African Descent to bridge the existing gaps between policies and practice. This should include the implementation of relevant recommendations for recognition, justice and development of people of African descent in Guyana. The International Decade is an opportunity to showcase achievements in this regard.

43. The Working Group also recommends that the Guyana authorities seriously consider constitutional reform to strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights, to address racism and racial discrimination.

44. The Working Group further recommends that the Human Rights Commission be constituted without further delay. It urges the Government to provide such institutions with the financial, human and technical expertise necessary for them to act in full independence, and the powers to fulfil their responsibilities.

45. The Working Group encourages the authorities to strengthen the functions and the capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman by expanding its human, financial and technical capacities, to carry out investigations on its own accord.

46. The Working Group strongly recommends that the Government collect, compile, analyse, disseminate and publish reliable statistical data, and take all measures necessary to assess regularly the situation of individuals and groups of individuals who are victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

47. The Working Group, recalling paragraph 99 of the Durban Declaration, in which States concerned are called upon "to honour the memory of the victims of past tragedies and affirm that, wherever and whenever these occurred, they must be

condemned and their recurrence prevented", recommends that the Government of Guyana take measures to preserve, protect and restore the memory of sites and places of the transatlantic trade in Africans and enslaved resistance, giving greater visibility to this history and culture through museums, monuments, visual arts and other means.

48. The Working Group recommends that resources be provided to people of African descent for the celebration of Emancipation Month.

49. In consultation with people of African descent, the relevant authorities should find ways to create memorials to honour people of African descent and African victims of historic tragedies; for example, monuments should be erected in Linden to commemorate the events of 1964 and 2012.

50. The Government should review and ensure that textbooks and other educational materials reflect historical facts accurately and adequately as they relate to past tragedies and atrocities, such as enslavement, trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism. School curricula should also serve to promote interracial harmony and respect for the traditions and cultures of the different ethnic groups living in Guyana.

51. The Government should ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and lift its reservations on article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

52. The Government should adopt a national plan of action against racial discrimination developed in consultation with and the involvement of civil society entities and associations representing people of African descent, with a focus on structural racial discrimination, legislative reforms, accountability and enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

53. The Working Group strongly encourages the Government to make efforts to reform the State judicial system. Steps should be taken to ensure that the right to a fair trial without undue delay is guaranteed not only in theory but also in practice.

54. Racial profiling must be prohibited by law and a complaint mechanism should be put in place to address this problem.

55. All prisons should be administered in accordance with the State's international human rights obligations, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Overcrowding in prisons and detention centres must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Measures should be taken to improve infrastructure and conditions of hygiene, and to make available the material, human and budgetary resources necessary to ensure that conditions of detention are in conformity with minimum international standards. Prisons that are not fit for human habitation, such as Lusignan Prison, should be closed and replaced with facilities that meet international standards.

56. The Working Group reiterates its call upon the Government of Guyana to investigate all allegations of reprisals, to hold perpetrators accountable and to ensure that persons interacting with the Working Group during its visit are not subjected to any harm, threat, harassment or punishment.

57. Juvenile detention centres must adhere to international human rights standards and implement programmes for the rehabilitation of children. All facilities in which children and young adults are placed should be independently monitored and inspected to ensure that standards of treatment and care are maintained.

58. The Government should take the measures necessary to guarantee that prompt and impartial inquiries are conducted into all extrajudicial killings by the police,

including those targeting people of African descent, perpetrators are prosecuted and effective remedies are provided to victims and their families.

59. **The teaching of history should be compulsory at the primary and secondary educational levels, thereby giving children of African descent a connection with their past and a sense of cultural identity. This knowledge will also be beneficial to others, who will come to appreciate the contribution of the Afro-Guyanese to the culture and development of Guyana, and could help to address the negative stereotypes and stigma that Afro-Guyanese persons face.**

60. **The Working Group urges the Government to revise and develop specific curricula and corresponding teaching materials that respect and recognize history, including the transatlantic trade in Africans. Such curricula should be incorporated into formal and informal education at the early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary levels.**

61. **The Working Group encourages the Government to consider establishing vocational schools across the country, and university-level education in Linden.**

62. **The Working Group also encourages the authorities to invest resources in sports activities and programmes for young people, including those of African descent.**

63. **The Government of Guyana should take all measures necessary to ensure the full implementation of the right to adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate housing.**

64. **Land allocation, including ancestral land, should be identified and demarcated.**

65. **Poverty, which largely affects people of African descent, should be addressed through the establishment of dedicated development funds to empower people of African descent who have been left behind.**

66. **The Working Group urges the Government to implement policies that accelerate the decentralization of power and access to resources. Special steps should be taken to increase accessibility of affordable loans for entrepreneurships by people of African descent.**

67. **Adequate policies should be implemented to prevent and effectively prosecute sexual harassment in the labour environment and beyond.**

68. **People of African descent should have access to health care whenever necessary. Full access to affordable medicines and vaccines is essential. Universal health coverage and public health schemes should be ensured without any discrimination.**

69. **The Working Group urges the Government to introduce urgently programmes aimed at reducing the suicide rate. In this regard, special attention should be paid to programmes providing medical and psychological care for those affected.**

70. **Mental health should be given adequate attention in the framework of the national health policy. Effective access to psychological care and advisory services must be ensured for persons of all ages, in particular for adolescents and young adults, those struggling with economic difficulties, and the elderly.**

71. **Programmes should be implemented to prevent and treat substance abuse. Efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS should also be strengthened.**

72. **Resources should be allocated to the Women and Gender Equality Commission to strengthen its accessibility.**

73. **The Government should initiate legal reforms aimed at addressing the cultural and religious rights of the Rastafari community.**

74. **In accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Working Group urges political leaders and parties to actively combat racism, racial**

discrimination and related intolerance, and to promote solidarity, tolerance and respect.

75. **The Working Group reminds the media of their important role as a public watchdog with special responsibilities for ensuring that factual and reliable information about people of African descent is reported, while refraining from political hate speech and the polarization of society.**

76. **The Working Group urges the Government to seek partnerships with civil society organizations when framing important legislation pertaining to people of African descent, and to provide them with adequate funding.**

77. **The Working Group encourages the United Nations country team to support the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a focus on indicators relevant to people of African descent.**

78. **Guyana must continue to play an active role in seeking reparatory justice by means of the efforts currently being made in the Caribbean Community, including its 10-point plan of action on reparations.**

79. **The Working Group reiterates its thanks to the Government of Guyana for its willingness to engage in dialogue, cooperation and action to combat racial discrimination. It hopes that the present report will support the Government in this process, and expresses its willingness to assist further in this important endeavour.**